

HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMITTEE

TOWN OF CAMDEN

June 14, 2011

Present: Chair: Kit Parker
Members: Elinor Klivans, Beedy Parker
Alternate: Abby Fitzgerald
Volunteers: Rosalee Glass, Ann Sziklas
Select Board Liaison: Deb Dodge
Garden Club Liaison: Judy McGuirk
Guests: Dave Jackson, Brian Hodges, Camden Development Director and Stuart Smith, businessman and downtown property owner.

Kit Parker called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m.

Secretary's Report:

The May 10, 2011 minutes were accepted as written.

Chair's Report

The public hearing for the Design Standard Ordinance, held in early May, was sparsely attended because property owners located in the Fire District had not been notified. David Dickey was present and spoke against the ordinance. The next Planning Board meeting became an information session where twenty irate property owners expressed their concerns, claiming that storeowners need an economic plan that provides growth, not another ordinance limiting what they can do to their property. Opponents wanted explicit definitions of materials allowed by the ordinance and pointed out that there are no timelines for the commission's actions on an application. In short, they found any certification of appropriateness offensive.

The Planning Board sub-committee, consisting of Householder, Sergeant, Chris Glass and Kit, would meet this week to review the property owners' suggestions and make some changes. There will be another public hearing on the matter.

Dave Jackson interjected that the downtown business community is "very anxious" in these difficult economic times. Kit expressed the opinion that the ordinance would attract new business and asked Stuart Smith for his thoughts.

Stuart Smith claimed he was "very much in support" of the concept, but wondered what was truly historic about downtown, pointing out that some buildings in the Fire District had remained the same and were historic, such as Boynton McKay, Dickey's end building and Smiling Cow, whereas his inn and other Dickey buildings on Mechanic Street had been so changed as to no longer be historic. He didn't want an owner to have to go to another board for permission to change something; approval by the Planning Board, with all its criteria is strong enough.

Stuart reminded us that that public pressure, not an ordinance, discouraged Dunkin' Donuts from moving into downtown. Deb Dodge pointed out that an ordinance would avoid the "destructive effect" of public pressure, which can be negative and unpleasant. When Beedy wondered what the status of the proposed ordinance would be in two or three years, Deb Dodge offered that if the time is not now, at least all the discussion would educate the public and "pave

the way” for its passing in the future.

There was a short discussion and some confusion about tax benefits to property owners located in historic districts.

New Business

Possible National Register consideration for 12 Bay View Street:

Brian Hodges gave a brief background and described the process for obtaining grant money for historically significant buildings in the downtown. A letter of intent has been sent to Augusta. Approval by Christi Mitchell for National Registry consideration for 12 Bay View Street must be obtained. He is asking the HRC to help by submitting our ideas that would support the value of the project with respect to historic preservation and its compatibility with Camden’s historic character. He would need those ideas in writing by June 17th.

Stuart Smith then recounted his knowledge of the building’s occupancy history, as garage with a turntable and automobile showroom, dance hall, newspaper office and cinema. Beedy thought it might once have been the Masonic Hall. Many changes to the building and especially to the façade may exempt it from qualifying, but Stuart plans to preserve the arch windows on the façade and the stairway, but he would install an elevator in the old car elevator shaft. His goal would be to use the upper floor space wisely, continuing its use as a cinema, but having three smaller theatres rather than one, two theatres each with fifty seats, one with eighty. They could be used for small meetings, but primarily for films or streaming videos. Peter Ott’s would remain a restaurant and the ground floor level, formerly Gilbert’s, would probably be some sort of food service operation, but downscaled from what it had been.

There ensued a lengthy discussion. Dave Jackson said his Cinema Committee, which had tried to turn the old playhouse on Mechanic Street back into a movie theatre, supports Stuart’s plan for a cinema, but wondered why they would pursue a national historic listing. Brian Hodges’ reply was that, if eligible, they could apply for grants.

Stuart Smith would like our committee’s support at the Select Board Public Hearing next Tuesday, June 21, when he presents his project. He asked that we speak to the historic aspect of the building’s previous uses.

Elinor Klivans volunteered to consult Barbara Dyer about the history of the building’s earlier uses. Other HRC members could review old Camden Heralds for news articles that might reveal its earlier uses.

There was a motion by Abby Fitzgerald, seconded by Elinor Klivans:

The Camden Historic Resources Committee supports the 12 Bay View Street project, based on its intention to retain the historic character of the building, realizing the benefits it would bring to the community. The committee believes its use as a cinema is compatible with the historic uses of the building.

The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Village Green: Judy McGuirk reported that the cedar apple rust plaguing the junipers was no better, but no worse. Debbie Masterson will be the new chairman in charge of the Village Green and there will be another clean-up day on Monday, June 20. Judy agreed to become liaison between our committee and the Camden Garden Club. Henceforth she will report on the state of

the Village Green.

Archives: Rosalee reported that her committee has been busy processing assorted documents and would soon start purging the working files. Her committee will meet with Dave Jackson on Thursday, June 16 to hunt for any correspondence between Fletcher Steele and local contractors regarding the Amphitheatre.

Harbor Park and Amphitheatre: Dave Jackson reported that the old elm tree struck by lightning was alive and well thanks to the ministrations of Doug Johnson. The overgrown shrubs along the south wall have been pruned back and wild strawberries planted along the base of the wall. He had received a last minute request for a walking tour that same day, which he could not accommodate, and pleaded for more tour leaders and a planned schedule. There was discussion regarding cruise ships' responsibilities and whether tour leaders should be paid.

Old Business

Deb Dodge explained it was "a matter of money" that DOT had not put down the special crosswalks in downtown Camden. Mark up by sub-contractors will make installing all 12 crosswalks prohibitive, but some will definitely be put down.

Other New Business

Kit mentioned that our committee has full membership, now with Full members: Kit, Mark, Elinor, Beedy and Sonia. Alternates: Susan and Abby.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE HRC WILL BE ON TUESDAY, JULY 12, 2011